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# General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

*Official Records*

**20**th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 1 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 9** *(continued)*

**General debate**

**The President:** The Assembly will first hear an address by the chairman of the delegation of Estonia, His Excellency Mr. Trivimi Velliste.

**Mr. Velliste** (Estonia): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. We wish you success in this responsible task in a year that will be of great importance for the Organization.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the previous President of the Assembly, Ambassador Ismail, who showed exceptional commitment to the reform initiatives throughout the fifty-first session. That recently concluded session was an important step towards a reinforced United Nations which, with its universal membership, will have to be able to deal with serious problems facing the world today.

We expect the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to be a decisive landmark in the renewal and restructuring of the United Nations — a major endeavour undertaken by Member States several years ago. In this respect we would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, who presented his report on this question to the General Assembly on 16 July. My Government lends its full support to Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his efforts. We also note with satisfaction that part of this package has already been implemented.

Estonia is looking forward to an agreement within the foreseeable future concerning a response by Member States to the Secretary-General's proposals. It is our sincere hope that Members will deal with this matter in a constructive manner and that a generally acceptable scheme for reforming the United Nations will be agreed upon. We are confident that all Member States will benefit from the reform of the Organization.

I would now like to focus my address on points of specific relevance to present needs in the reform package. The aim of reform as a whole is to adapt the Organization to its new challenges, to make it more effective and efficient, more manageable and modern in every way. We are now remodelling this Organization to make it compatible with the twenty-first century. The world has changed — the United Nations has to change with it. Having criteria for the appraisal of performance seems to be of crucial importance. Result-based budgeting should assure a strengthened linkage between intergovernmental mandates and their efficient implementation. Enhanced cost effectiveness envisaged for 1998-1999 is also an encouraging sign.

Estonia lends strong support to the idea of cutting the number of agenda items for future sessions. We also find the idea of consolidating the representation of different United Nations funds and programmes in

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Member States on common premises and under one flag to be very attractive. United Nations Houses would enhance the visibility of the Organization and provide a valuable source of information about it and its activities. I would like to note the positive experience Estonia has gathered in cooperation with the local United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office. Many programmes vital to Estonia have materialized owing to the support of the UNDP. We highly appreciate this cooperation and hope that the future United Nations House will be able to use that valuable expertise.

The financing of the United Nations is a question that interests all of us. Without adequate financing, the Organization would not be able to fulfil its mandate. This fifty-second session of the General Assembly must assess the impact of the Secretary-General's proposed reforms on the programme budget for 1998-1999 and define a new scale of assessments for its Member States. Estonia supports the Secretary-General's reform measures aimed at enhancing the Organization's effectiveness and better implementation of its programmes by reducing excessive and unnecessary expenditures.

With regard to the new scale of assessments, Estonia would like to see a more transparent scale based on the fundamental principle of capacity to pay to be adopted. All measures should lead towards putting the Organization on a sound and predictable financial footing. We believe that the main prerequisite for achieving this goal is that Member States clear their arrears to the regular as well as to the peacekeeping budgets. Estonia is committed to doing so.

We welcome the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, to the position of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Estonia supports the plan for the consolidation of the Centre for Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights into one office. We would also like to stress the importance that we attach to adequate financing of the Organization's human rights machinery.

Two major events have occurred in the past year in the field of economic and social cooperation. The first of them was the adoption of the Agenda for Development. Estonia shares the perception of the importance of development issues for the United Nations. Health and education should also be high priorities. The second such event was the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the aim of which was to review the implementation of Agenda 21, the global plan of action for sustainable development adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Although the special session acknowledged the positive results which have been achieved since Rio, it also expressed concern over worsened overall trends for sustainable development. In this regard, we expect the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to give further political impetus to the implementation of the mandates and tasks defined at the session.

In Estonia, we believe that our task today is to provide the present generation with the safe, good-quality living environment and resources needed to promote a strong and diversified economy without compromising the needs of future generations. For that reason, over the last five years Estonia has signed, ratified and acceded to more than 40 bilateral and multilateral environment agreements and conventions. We have also established the Governmental Commission on Sustainable Development, led by the Prime Minister. Estonia is working closely with the countries in the Baltic Sea area to develop a Baltic region sustainable development strategy.

I would like to stress the importance that we attach to the consideration of economic and social issues by the General Assembly. With this in view, the work of the Second and Third Main Committees should be rationalized in order to avoid any overlap and duplication.

One of the central areas of the reform concerns renewing the Security Council. This year, Member States must continue efforts to achieve the goal of making the Council more representative and to improve its working methods. Estonia elaborated its position in cooperation with a group of smaller like-minded countries. We support enlargement in both existing categories. We also view Germany and Japan as potential new permanent members of the Council. The developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America should also be represented on a permanent basis.

Disarmament has been one of the United Nations priority goals since its founding. In fact, disarmament efforts have yielded considerable progress. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty last year was an important step forward.

One of the important responsibilities of the United Nations is managing conflicts — acting rapidly in the face of crises. Peacekeeping continues to be an important activity of the Organization. In recent years, we have

been witnessing a change in the role of United Nations peacekeeping missions. United Nations peacekeepers have been facing the challenge of dealing with internal conflicts throughout the world.

Estonia is continuing to take part in United Nations peacekeeping. An Estonian company has recently completed its successful deployment in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Together with Latvia and Lithuania, we are looking forward to contributing a battalion of peacekeepers to the United Nations peacekeeping operations. The battalion, called BALTBAT, will be operational from the beginning of 1998. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all Member States of the Organization that have been participating in this project. The initial experience of Baltic peacekeepers in United Nations peacekeeping missions has shown how regional cooperation evolves into global cooperation. The Baltic preparedness to merge as a joint battalion is an element strengthening regional security. It proves our readiness to assume responsibility as well as our right to choose our own means of security. Estonia is currently contributing civilian police officers and military observers. We have also joined the United Nations peacekeeping standby arrangement.

We strongly believe in the cooperation of the United Nations with regional organizations in all parts of the world. Reliance on the expertise and capacities of these organizations would allow us to avoid duplication and allocate scarce resources in the most effective manner. We do have examples of fruitful cooperation with regional entities. In Europe, we have been witnessing joint United Nations actions, in particular with the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe and with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

We would like to note that the structure and composition of regional organizations is changing. The European Union and NATO are gradually opening to new members. This is a very important phenomenon in the process towards enhancing stability and security in our region. Estonia associates its future with full membership in both of these organizations.

In conclusion, let me express my sincere hope that on the eve of the twenty-first century mankind is willing to reverse its classical interpretation of the past so eloquently expressed at the dawn of this century by the English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy:

> "War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading." [Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*, pt. II, *Spirit Sinister*]

**The President**: The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Security and Attorney-General of Belize, His Excellency the Honourable Dean Barrow.

**Mr. Barrow** (Belize): Permit me first to offer you, Sir, the congratulations of Belize's delegation on your election, and the assurance of our fullest cooperation as you follow through on the accomplishments of your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia.

As the world shifts gears towards a preoccupation with what could be described as millennium fever, our annual stocktaking exercise becomes particularly poignant. And if truth be told, the record of our success — measured against the historical vision of the founders and against current challenges — is not an unsullied one. Nevertheless, in every sphere of human endeavour, in every tangible advance of international comity, the signature of the United Nations can be found. We have contributed to fundamental changes for good in the fabric of the global community. Of course, and as is always the case with less than perfect man-made enterprises, our job is far from done.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report on the work of the Organization, we live in an era of realignment. Belize shares his view that this Organization has to continue adjusting to the changes which envelop today's world, so as to maintain the balance in favour of a more secure and predictable peace, greater economic well-being, social justice and environmental sustainability.

Despite sea changes in the international climate, the relevance of the original objectives of the Organization's Charter remains acute. There is still need to respond rapidly to threats to international peace and security. Economic and social development must be further advanced. Human rights, the rule of law and the ideals of democratic, accountable governance must be concretized in our daily life. And the changes, such as globalization and reshaping of the United Nations environment must strengthen the commitment of nations large and small to international cooperation. The one fundamental lesson that the experience of the last 52 years has taught is that we cannot go it alone. There is large benefit to be derived from multilateralism; and to our mind the United

Nations is the one organization with the wherewithal and capacity to take global action on a global agenda.

We have been promised that the renewed United Nations system sought by the Secretary-General will become both more effective and more efficient. The extensive and far-reaching set of changes proposed in his Programme for Reform are said to be designed to achieve greater unity of purpose, coherence of effort and flexibility in response. Belize therefore joins with those voices applauding the attempt to strengthen and streamline the United Nations and enhance its institutional capacity. My delegation will eagerly await opportunities to hear comment and will participate in joint analysis of the proposed Programme for Reform.

One major hindrance to the Organization's capacity is its dire financial situation. We have noted proposals within the Secretary-General's Programme for Reform designed to ensure a viable financial basis for the Organization. It is my delegation's view, however, that there is still a need for greater clarification if financial solvency is to be assured. We are not entirely convinced that the creation of the proposed Revolving Credit Fund will alleviate the situation. We would rather see implementation of measures for harsher censure in cases of tardiness in meeting obligations. Let us again state our view that this Organization should be granted some measure of autonomy in generating revenue from sources outside national Administrations.

There is an ongoing parallel at the national and organizational level aimed at economizing. Streamlining, downsizing, or the process of retrenchment by any name, carries with it a human cost. We must therefore make every effort to ensure that the product of reform is greater than the sum of its parts. Within this context, we wish to offer the caution that in our eagerness to integrate Secretariat entities and units the critical thrust and focus of various departments, divisions and programmes, should not be lost. The gasp of the weak and poor all too frequently can barely be heard above the loudly trumpeted agenda of powerful constituencies.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law have taken on renewed paramountcy, particularly in the post-conflict societies of Latin America. Good governance is the foundation upon which we build structures to ensure sustainable development and durable peace. In both the subregions to which Belize belongs this is a principle that achieves practical as well as intellectual expression. And we find this fact noteworthy: that so soon after internal conflicts convulsed the isthmus, the countries of Central America have been able democratically and constitutionally to reinvigorate their societies. It is also remarkable that so harmoniously has their economic integration movement advanced, that they are now prepared to contemplate the next step of political union. While this is logical, it is also a quantum leap.

Now, for juridical and historical reasons, Belize can only be an observer in this process. But we wish to assure our Central American brothers that in our heart of hearts we too are Morazanistas. We too are uplifted and inspired by this great visionary. And we sympathize keenly with the spirit of the legacy that now animates his modern-day progeny.

In the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) the coming of the single market is only the most dramatic expression of a new solidarity that Belize enthusiastically embraces. We continue to draw vital sustenance from what is, after all, a West Indian partnership rooted in a shared love for, and practice of, democracy, a democracy that is not resting on its laurels, but that is engaged now in a process of revitalization based on the urgent search for collective economic security and social advance.

The proposals for reform encompass suggestions to achieve greater coordination and cooperation among the United Nations agencies and entities which help nations like mine pursue the central priority of sustainable development. We hope, however, that the effectiveness and responsiveness of individual agencies will not be compromised.

More will have to be said about seeking innovative means to attract greater capital to finance development. The argument that a development dividend can be realized by a shift of resources from administration to development activities, is not, to our mind, persuasive. Any possible savings in administrative costs could hardly be adequate enough to make significant progress in our collective effort to eradicate poverty.

We have yet to hear any general admission of satisfaction with the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21 and other agreements reached at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The special session clearly did not meet expectations for the adoption of clear targets, commitments and specific initiatives as we progress along the road from Rio. Long-term

commitment and concerted action in the field are still critical if we are to continue to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing global population without depleting the resource base on which our very subsistence depends.

We are heartened that the practical agreements reached at the so-called Earth Summit + 5 included those of major concern to small island developing States, such as climate change, tourism and natural disasters. Belize, a country with a low-lying coastal plain, several coral atolls and more than 100 coral islands, experiences challenges similar to those that face small island developing States. At the United Nations we participate within the very active Alliance of Small Island States, and we remain faithful to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the 1994 Global Conference in Barbados. We look forward to the in-depth assessment of the Barbados Programme to be conducted at the forthcoming two-day special session to be held immediately preceding the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

Belize will continue to insist that the constituency of low-lying coastal States be accorded the deserved support of the international community so that we too may share in the tangible benefits to be accrued.

Countries like mine will also increasingly depend upon the United Nations to steer the way forward in building the new framework within which developed and developing nations interact. Against the backdrop of globalization and market liberalization, a new partnership is called for. The role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional commissions in examining the issues pertinent to globalization and development and the effective integration of developing countries into the international trading system is especially key, for the recent negative rulings by the World Trade Organization on the European Union banana regime, which secured access for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, fully demonstrate the dangers inherent in unbridled liberalization shorn of consideration for the special needs of small, vulnerable and disadvantaged economies.

In the current climate, it is perhaps basest apostasy to question the new catechism of free trade. "Revisionism" is a bad word, and heresy will no doubt be swiftly repaid by excommunication. But has not the zeal of the convert blinded us to the humanism of the original aims of preferential access? After all, this was not some hopelessly capricious or unreasoning altruism. Preferential access regimes represented, rather, a real and sincere effort to enable small developing countries to produce for the international marketplace, to offer their societies a chance at a decent standard of living and to assure them a special stake in the global economy.

Although economic thinking has changed, the objective conditions of poor countries have not. Fervent recitation of the new mantra alone can never wipe out the diseconomies of scale for small, primary-producing States. We cannot now compete on equal terms. Yet our calls go unheeded for the comprehensive capital inflows and technical assistance so vitally necessary to achieve the structural adjustment that will enable us to participate equitably in the new trading arrangements. I repeat to the industrialized world what surely has now become our *cri de coeur*: do not cut off our legs, then tell us to run.

Development is still one of the most important aspirations in today's world. To return to my earlier complaint, the achievement of economic growth and sustainable development has not been balanced throughout the five regions that United Nations comprises. It is an understatement to say that globalization and economic liberalization have had a different kind of impact on some of us. A few nations now enjoy the increased well-being, while others are visited only by deepening marginalization.

The recently adopted United Nations Agenda for Development stresses the role of the Organization in development matters. The Agenda is one concrete manner in which we can collectively address the issues and problems relevant to development and, in particular, development's peculiar relationship with peace, democracy, good governance and human rights.

Belize repeats its call for an annual observance by the General Assembly at which development policy would be the focus of debate. Such encounters could maintain the Agenda's impetus, as well as provide a forum for discussing effective and coordinated follow-through with regard to commitments made at the several global conferences.

Preventive diplomacy and peacemaking are still the best means at the Organization's disposal in its efforts at conflict avoidance. The wide range of activities carried out in the name of preventive diplomacy must ever be mindful that success can be guaranteed only with the consent of all parties.

Both the Security Council and the General Assembly, in extending existing operations or authorizing additional ones, must continue to issue clear mandates. In the light of the financial situation, some collective discipline will have to be applied in authorizing mandates when adequate resources are not available.

On a related subject, we have learned of efforts under way to develop the Organization's rapid-deployment capability. This dimension is necessary, but any deployment in this sense must withstand the scrutiny of national consent. Again, we would prefer to see the preventive aspect stressed rather than the enforcement side. Further, a rapid-reaction capability is not needed solely to respond to threats to peace in the traditional sense. Recent measures employed to enhance the Organization's humanitarian response to both man-made and natural disasters are also demonstrative of the requirement for the institutionalization of a rapid-response capability.

In the Secretary-General's programme for reform, deserved emphasis is placed on strengthening international cooperation to combat the new threats to civil society. The deleterious effects of crime, drugs and terrorism know no borders.

The administrative changes to be instituted by the Secretariat to focus action through the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme should give us the upper hand in waging war against the forces of uncivil society.

Countries such as mine expend huge amounts of limited resources in addressing these concerns, which, in a small State, can amount to nothing less than threats to national security. Further, we are convinced that the global nature of the problem requires the highest level of international cooperation that can be achieved. This must embody the concept of multilateralism and reject unilateral devices which disrespect the sovereignty of States.

Belize's declaration affirming respect for the personality, sovereignty and independence of States, which was sponsored by 30 members of the Organization of American States (OAS) at the twenty-seventh session of its General Assembly at Lima, Peru, speaks directly to this issue and strongly promotes the spirit of partnership that must underpin an interdependent approach to addressing the common problem of narcotics trafficking and abuse.

International cooperation in this regard must mean the avoidance of not just political, but also of economic, unilateralism. For example, the banana industry in my country may well be destroyed by the efforts of the very people who claim to be our partners in the fight against illicit drugs. We have a saying in Belize that the same knife that sticks the sheep sticks the goat. If the prosperity of strategically vulnerable southern Belize is to be sacrificed now on the altar of the new orthodoxy, it will not be long before the substitute blandishments of the drug trade undermine our national anti-narcotics efforts to the point where they too become only burnt offerings at the feet of the deity. The immutable, compassionless law of the market is very much a two-edged sword.

It is in this context that the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on illicit drugs is especially timely. It will afford Member States an opportunity to discuss joint action in preventing money laundering, international cooperation in judicial affairs and law enforcement. But the debate must be a thoroughly holistic one that looks carefully at the interrelatedness of economic well-being and effective anti-narcotics policies.

We commend the prudence of this Assembly in its decision that the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council should continue deliberations during the current session.

In the absence of any general agreement within the Working Group, Belize would find it difficult to accept a strict deadline in relation to Council expansion. Further, we do not wish to see qualitative distinctions in the decision making ability of existing and possible new permanent members. We note with gratitude that Belize's comprehensive proposals on the subject are still included among the views being considered.

On another issue related to reform, the principles of equitability and universality confer urgency on the claim for consideration of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Twenty-one million people living in a successful, robust and prosperous democracy should be entitled at the very least to a discussion of their circumstances. The blanket "no", the annual ritual that continues to slam the door shut on even the possibility of debating their aspirations, is irrational and unenlightened. A way must be found to review this situation in a manner consistent with the rights of the parties and the spirit of the Charter.

This Organization, it appears, is completing a period of intense self-examination and introspection. We must continue to counter the influences that would ascribe a diminished role to multilateralism. Our flexibility and a visible search for consensus have enabled us to retool. We are demonstrating that we are still equal to the tasks ahead. With reform and renewal moving to the fore this year, it is clear that the crisis of confidence is over.

With an able chief executive, the United Nations is now, therefore, strengthening and repositioning itself to surmount the challenges that face us.

It is our sincere wish that in the weeks ahead we will reach a new pass in our great undertaking, and that momentous debate will result in keen, relevant and timely decision-making.

**The President**: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis.

**Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda): On behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. You are well known to many of the envoys to the United Nations, and we feel confident that under your guidance we will have a productive session. I likewise wish to express my country's recognition to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, for the manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-first session. I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, who is entrusted with the advancement of this Organization at such a critical time in its history.

One cannot walk through the edifices of the United Nations without being asked to comment on the reform process and the value of the number of conferences that the Organization has staged. The conferences of this decade have certainly had an impact on our understanding of certain concepts, practices and generationally imparted beliefs. Though we have taken many decisions, implementation has proved to be difficult, and a fundamental aspect of the reason or reasons for this is that the United Nations needs to be reformed, and Governments need to zealously renew their commitments to its existence and continued advancement.

The Secretary-General's report is most welcome, and there are many points on which my country is in agreement and others on which we think continued discussion and debate are needed. Peace, security and disarmament are vital to a safe and secure planet, and the countless individuals who live daily in constant fear — whether because of terrorists, hatred between ethnic groups, internecine warfare or religious persecution — gives us much concern.

The Organization must have trained and equipped forces at all times, and the decision of a group of Member States to participate in the establishment of a standby high-readiness brigade is most encouraging. Additionally, there is a need for the demobilization of paramilitary groups, for demining and for an intensification of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. Subsequently, the problems associated with financing peace operations need to be addressed in a meaningful manner.

Antigua and Barbuda strongly supports the concept of results-based budgeting and endorses the proposal to have the Secretary-General and the representatives of Member States enter into a dialogue aimed at shifting the United Nations programme budget from a system of input accounting to one of results-based accountability. Likewise, my country welcomes the reforms already put in place in the Secretariat, through which field operations have been considerably expanded, as a result of cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant departments.

We are anxiously looking forward to June of next year, when the diplomatic conference on the need to establish an international criminal court will convene. This undertaking is long overdue, and Antigua and Barbuda has been working with neighbouring countries to thwart the dangers of increased international crime, which is so active in this hemisphere. Of particular concern is the need for greater coordination among nations if the blight of narcotics is to be meaningfully tackled. Strong and determined efforts within certain countries will be seriously undermined if there is not a united global approach to manifestations and practices which will destroy not only the fabric of our societies but the lives of countless individuals.

The most talked-about aspect of reform, however, is the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Numerous proposals on the question have been advanced, some adding more confusion to the existing deliberations. As such, Antigua and Barbuda

wishes to reiterate its declared position that any expansion should include developing countries, and that both the Group of African States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States should be represented.

We would similarly like to see certain restrictions placed on the use of the veto. We understand that all efforts at restructuring and reform in the United Nations, however, should be focused on economic growth and development. In addition, my country is calling for a reversal in the diminishing role of the General Assembly. The accountability of the Security Council to the General Assembly must be re-emphasized, and the General Assembly should more actively assert its role in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950, entitled "Uniting for peace".

The buzzword that we are constantly hearing is "globalization". Those of us from small developing countries would rather have the emphasis placed on poverty alleviation, but the present-day reality incorporates the belief that the emphasized process of globalization and economic integration is unavoidable. There are new techniques of production and new forms of organization which have given flexibility to the location of industrial activities and have reduced the share of wages in production costs. In many of our democratic societies throughout the world, where sacrifices have been made to reduce unemployment, Governments are faced with the daunting and even frightening reality that labour is becoming a dispensable commodity. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization all are promoting the emergence of a global market. The small countries of the Caribbean are forced to adapt, and our businessmen must accept the reality that the concept of protected markets is fast disappearing.

The multilateral financial institutions which provide resources to developing countries at concessional rates continue to use the gross national product as a basis for judging our economic wherewithal. Antigua and Barbuda is deemed to be middle-income, but the reality of my country's various vulnerabilities causes our people and those of other Caribbean countries to bow to the flattery and highlight the unjustness of this means of measurement.

Our sister island of Montserrat has recently had a series of severe volcanic eruptions which have caused the inhabitants much pain and anguish, and Antigua and Barbuda, along with other Caribbean Community countries, has endeavoured to render assistance. As a result, the population of Antigua and Barbuda has increased by some 5 percent, which means that the resources of Government for housing, health, education and all other services are strained. Our citizens have, however, rendered much support, and Antigua and Barbuda will do all in its power to help alleviate the plight of our brothers and sisters from that lovely but now unsafe island. We strongly support the recommendation of the Committee of 24 that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme should move swiftly to assist in alleviating the plight of the sturdy but beleaguered population of the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean.

There are other dangerous volcanoes in the Caribbean, and one is presently forming undersea in the vicinity of Grenada. In 1974 Antigua and Barbuda experienced an earthquake which measured 7.8 on the Richter scale and which caused considerable destruction. In 1995 Hurricane Luis unleashed its fury on our country for 48 hours and was declared to have been the worst storm of the century. Indeed, a single hurricane can set back our development some 10 years. Yet the gross national product continues to be used to measure our economic performance, resulting in the absurd distortion of Antigua and Barbuda's being deemed more developed than Mexico or Brazil.

We are pleased to read that at the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the conclusion was reached that an economic system has no intrinsic value. It has to be assessed in relation to the betterment of the human condition. As such, a good economic system should of necessity provide opportunities for sufficient income to all members of the society; generate enough resources to enable public institutions to fulfil their responsibilities and promote the common good; and permit, in addition to the government, participation by citizens and other public and private actors in the decision-making process. To this end, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is presently holding meetings in various forums to discuss precisely the realities of globalization and the achievement of a single market within the Caribbean Community.

In June of this year a special session of the General Assembly was held on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. Though there was disappointment at the outcome due to the inability of countries to coalesce around a common position or common commitments, there was the clear recognition that the threat to the global commons remains a profound

reality. There is continued overexploitation and degradation of what has been bequeathed to mankind, whether in regard to overfishing, overgrazing, excessive destruction of forests, or air and water pollution. We have collectively failed to capitalize on the promise and accomplishments of the 1992 Rio Conference.

Nine out of ten people in both the developed and developing world have no idea what the term "sustainable development" means and how it affects them. Nine out of ten also have little appreciation of why mutual recognition and mutual action are necessary. People have not been made partners in the process of sustainable development, and Governments should do more to make them so by education via the mass media, in the schools, in public debate and in public presentations.

The industrialized countries must take the lead in changing their patterns of production and consumption to save the global environment and assist developing countries such as mine in our effort to meet our peoples' basic needs, to eradicate poverty and achieve economic growth. During the special session in June, Caribbean newspapers reported that every Caribbean representative zeroed in on the "poverty issue".

To eradicate poverty and achieve economic growth is not an easy task and has been further compounded by the fact that official development assistance, a crucial part of the Rio agreements, has fallen from 0.33 per cent in 1992 to 0.27 per cent in 1995. This is well below the agreed and accepted target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of the industrialized countries pledged to development assistance. The precipitous fall in official development assistance has shifted the burden for sustainable development unfairly to developing countries, destroying in the process the equitable balance which was reached at that very important Conference. Private capital and foreign direct investment, once touted as the panacea for sustainable development in developing countries, have shown only selective benefits to some countries and have bypassed the vast majority. A combination of private capital flows, foreign direct investment and debt relief as part of an overall financial package may be a solution.

In recognizing that an integrated approach to sustainable development is necessary, since political, economic, social and environmental issues are closely interlinked and intertwined, we cannot overlook the integral role that women can and should play in the quest for sustainable development. In Rio, women were considered a major group whose involvement was necessary to receive the sought-after goals. Mainstreaming women's concerns and participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all development and management of environmental programmes to ensure that women benefit is necessary for sustainable development. In this regard, we call on the multilateral and bilateral donors to increase their support for women's organizations in countries such as mine to enable them to play an active role in all aspects of the developmental process.

There is, however, the fact that we must stress repeatedly: the need to reduce the speed of the globalization thrust. Dominant Governments and institutions are setting deadlines and establishing agendas with such severe demands that most other actors find them impossible to follow. The alternative to participation, as it now stands, is marginalization. If all countries are required to fully participate, then there is a clear need for selective linking processes with reference to both national circumstances and national cultures.

This brings me to the vexing question of bananas. The undoing of the Lomé trade agreement and the injury which this hostile act will inflict on small, banana-exporting countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, of which Antigua and Barbuda is a member, is tantamount to an act of war. Small, peace-loving States, causing no harm to any other State under the terms of the Lomé agreement, have found themselves yoked by the recent World Trade Organization ruling. Without some form of protection, the banana industry in the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) would collapse, leading to severe social dislocation which would ultimately manifest itself in political catastrophe. Be reminded that on more than one occasion, the President of the United States has cautioned that in this galloping global economy, small States cannot be trampled upon by their large neighbours.

When my country chose to host in May of this year the regional seminar of the Committee of 24, better known as the Special Committee on Decolonization, it was because we knew that the Caribbean has many other obstacles to overcome in the emerging history of our region and the global community. Highlighted at the meeting was the principled position of the Special Committee that the sustained economic growth and social advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories is an essential prerequisite of the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Of necessity, particular attention has to be given to the environment, natural disaster

mitigation, public health, education, economic self-sufficiency, the prevention of crime and illicit drug trafficking.

The Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean have the same problems as the independent countries in regard to narcotics. There is a multidimensional thrust upon our entities, as there is the challenge to governability by non-State actors, the drug operators. Caribbean countries additionally have to contend with extraterritoriality and other forms of sovereignty challenges from other States, primarily because of conflicting interests and because the Caribbean States are small and lack significant power.

The countries of CARICOM are, however, endeavouring to improve most aspects of their existence, and new ground in the integration arrangement has been broken. Haiti has joined the ranks of CARICOM, a development which is considered to be of immense significance, and we wish to applaud the decision to have the United Nations Mission in Haiti extended. There has been further movement towards the CARICOM single market and economy. When Protocol II is ratified, the ground will be laid for the free movement of factors of production among countries which have agreed to be bound by its provisions. A plan is being developed for the sustainability of both tourist and airline industries in the region. Approval was given to a comprehensive human resource development plan for the specific purpose of building a more creative and productive workforce in the Caribbean. Indeed, the countries of CARICOM are endeavouring to overcome the major legacy of colonialism: being placed on the periphery of the industrialized world.

As a collective body seeking the betterment of mankind, the countries which form the United Nations need to recognize that human advancement requires managing markets as well as liberating them. Clearly, unbridled markets tend to produce a race to the bottom, manifested through a global search for the location with the weakest regulatory, environmental, social and labour standards. What is required is for rich and poor countries to have a commonality of purpose that ensures a path of sustainable development. Year after year my country pleads for genuine acceptance of the principle of multilateralism, yet what is projected under the banner is of a selective nature projected by and through the powerful and the dominant. Together we must find a way towards a global regime that reduces emissions of greenhouse gases, accepting the necessity of well-off nations to transfer the technology to make this possible rather than viewing this shift as another opportunity for private industry to profit.

It is sad that competitiveness can be pushed in a direction which handicaps and retards human development. State socialism failed, and in the process deprived hundreds of millions of individuals of both liberty and prosperity. Market forces, taken to the extreme, yield poorly distributed rates of growth, plunder the natural environment and are most devastating in regard to the wreckage of humans. The States of the developing world are not just emerging markets, they are human societies. Markets must be our servant, not our master. Clearly, the reality of commerce is global, but the paths to human development have historically been proven to be local.

In approaching the twenty-first century, the Government of the twin island States of Antigua and Barbuda has decided that it should focus on human capital and its development rather than focusing narrowly on the economic question. There will be a continuance of the policy of carrying out intense investigations and feasibility studies to decide where to concentrate limited resources. In addition, even though the Government is divesting itself of some of its holdings and encouraging greater private investment in vital services and commodities, there are some areas, particularly those surrounding technology, in which the Government has to remain directly involved and catalytic; it will continue with its practice of seeking consensus on determining key industries and activities crucial and critical for development.

We will continue to take pride in and to cherish the United Nations, as we recognize its capacity for achievements in areas beyond the reach of national or regional authorities. Now the nations which comprise this body must redouble their collective commitment for translating vision into reality. That is why it is essential to have international cooperation for development in the forefront of our activities. The United Nations is still our greatest hope for peace, development and social justice.

**The President:** I call now on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Attaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

**Mr. Attaf** (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Sir, gives me the pleasant opportunity to congratulate you most warmly and to wish

you all the best for success in carrying out the noble task entrusted to you.

I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who discharged his mandate with a skill and effectiveness that earned our respect and appreciation.

My praise goes also to Mr. Kofi Annan, who since taking up his duties has worked with courage and selflessness to revitalize the Organization with a view to bringing it into step with the times and with the aspirations of the peoples it brings together.

We are meeting once again at a time when it is being confirmed and reconfirmed that the international Organization is facing a comprehensive transition involving two fundamental questions: whether mankind is able, first, to form a concept of the Organization and to put that concept into practice, and secondly, to ensure that the concept and its implementation enjoy universal participation rather than being the sole preserve of the dominant Powers.

The fact is that this transition has both a political and a strategic dimension. Now, soon after the cold war, the closure of the East-West rift and the end of the bipolar system, we must find a new pattern of balances in order to establish a new, more just and more unified world order, a world order that respects the interests and aspirations of all, a world order that quite simply restores the values and ideals on which our Organization was built.

This transitional phase also has a basic economic dimension: the challenge of globalization, which must be faced by us all in unity so that there will be room for the aspirations of each of us. The test is to master globalization, for unbridled globalization would bring new setbacks and new exclusions, which would pose a threat to all.

Finally, this transition has a new dimension: that of coping with threats thus far misunderstood or underestimated, such as the scourges of international terrorism, drug trafficking, international organized crime and environmental degradation. In a related vein, we must share the objective of establishing States based on the rule of law, human rights and good governance as the foundation of the new international relations we are building.

Clearly, the United Nations is an active partner in this global transition; hence, it must first of all adapt itself to ongoing changes so that it can influence their development. The Secretary-General has in fact taken the good step of beginning reflection along these lines, for which we commend him, and has taken the initiative to reform the Organization.

Here, let me share some of my thoughts on this great plan for the future.

My first thought is somewhat methodological in nature. In the package of reforms submitted we distinctly see those which come within the sole purview of the Secretary-General of our Organization, and he has the right as well as the duty to implement these reforms. But at the same time, it is equally clear that other proposed reforms come only within the purview of Member States, which must naturally discuss them before taking a decision.

My second thought gives me the opportunity first of all to express our satisfaction at the inclusion of new priorities in United Nations activities — be they in the area of human rights, humanitarian affairs, the environment, combating terrorism or the crackdown on drug trafficking. These are all new universal concerns, and the United Nations has a central place in dealing with them.

Having said that, the objective of streamlining our Organization's activities should not sacrifice what has been and remains the very reason for being of the United Nations — the two pillars on which it has always rested, namely peace and development.

From this standpoint, international cooperation for development, as much as international security and disarmament affairs, must not suffer on account of the restructuring contemplated. Otherwise, the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations would be eroded in these areas of action, which are destined to remain at the forefront of the challenges which our countries will have to face.

My third thought concerns the financial crisis of our Organization. Proposals made by the Secretary-General, be it to introduce a new culture of management of resources or to create a revolving fund, are of some interest. However, it is important that Member States be motivated, first and foremost, by the obligation they have pursuant to the provisions of the Charter to pay their contribution to the budget of the Organization regularly and fully. This, in effect, is where we find the genuine

and lasting solution to a problem which seems to go on indefinitely and which should be distinguished and solved as such, without its serving as justification for depriving the United Nations of essential functions which it intends to undertake in the service of all.

My fourth thought relates to the United Nations General Assembly. If it has become absolutely necessary today to streamline the work of this central body and to re-examine its programme and work methods, we should, by the same token, see to it that the Assembly continues to be the special forum of States where essential issues concerning peace, security and development can be debated and considered. This is certainly one of the most appropriate ways to ensure effective participation in the management of world affairs, in our quest for solutions to international problems, and to promote genuine democratization of international relations.

In the era of democracy, transparency and proper management that we are claiming for our countries, there is nothing more normal than to insist, together, on the same values and principles in this Organization which unites us.

It is in this same spirit that we see the problem of the legal nature of General Assembly decisions and resolutions, which should be given the necessary effectiveness. It is also in this spirit that we see the problem of re-balancing the powers of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, which should come consistently within the scope of redefining all the relationships among the principal organs of the United Nations.

Finally, and this is my last thought, a revision of the United Nations Charter is of crucial importance and requires in-depth thought which would raise our Organization to a level on par with the vision, principles and objectives which are inherent in it.

In this same line of thought, and even if this goes beyond the context of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, I would like to refer to the issue of the expansion of the Security Council. The Council is, quite obviously, the body whose role and responsibilities best reflect the hopes, expectations and, above all, the frustrations of States. Consequently, it is important that the reform tries to reflect correctly the qualitative and quantitative changes which have taken place in international relations.

The enhancement of the political and moral authority, as well as the legitimacy, of this vital body requires a balanced representation within it, whether with regard to permanent or non-permanent seats. Furthermore, any decisions regarding its expansion and the revision of its methods of deliberation and decision-making would benefit by having the broadest possible support of Member States.

The declaration of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi in April 1997, which was reaffirmed here in New York, and that of African heads of State and Government in Harare in June 1997 are, in this regard, valuable contributions for our collective thinking regarding the membership and functioning of the Security Council which we all hope will serve our common expectations.

Among the new challenges facing the international community, terrorism is the one which apparently is the most formidable because of its threats not only to the basic rights of the individual but also to the very democratic foundations of our societies. No State can consider itself immune from these threats in the long run.

In this regard, we should welcome the international community's awareness which has taken shape of the real nature of this phenomenon. This has been accompanied by greater mobilization of efforts against this scourge, which, above and beyond hindering economic and social development of States, engenders the most serious dangers to international peace and security. In addition, we should welcome the decision of the General Assembly to include the campaign against international terrorism among the major priorities in its medium-term plan of action. The present stage requires that we make effective use of every achievement by guiding United Nations action in an innovative and practical direction, based on operational legal aspects of multilateral activities against terrorism.

*Mr. Kamara (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

In the same vein, the conclusion of an international convention to suppress acts of terrorism in an integrated, global manner must be one of the major priority areas for more effective international action. The international community must, above all, resolutely respond to the needs of the struggle against terrorism, depriving terrorists of sanctuary and strictly abiding by the relevant international instruments.

In every sphere, Algeria is continuing to work for the emergence and consolidation of mutually beneficial frameworks for dialogue, solidarity and cooperation and for the promotion of relations based on confidence, mutual respect and common interest. That is what guides Algeria in its commitment to building a Maghreb that is united, acts in solidarity and is stable and prosperous. Algeria, which has made the Maghreb project a national priority, is resolved to work together with its partners there to relaunch the process of building the Maghreb on a solid and durable basis.

To this end, my country is contributing to the search for a just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara. Aware of its responsibilities as both a neighbouring country and an official observer of the Settlement Plan, Algeria has repeatedly urged the international community to shoulder its responsibilities with regard to the peace process in Western Sahara. The recent agreement in Houston, resulting from the direct talks between the Kingdom of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, under the auspices of Mr. James Baker, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, brought a solution to problems that had until then prevented implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan. This constitutes major progress towards the final settlement of this conflict, and Algeria, like the rest of the international community, is delighted. Concerned for the stability and security of the region, Algeria will continue to make a full contribution to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy aimed at the holding of a referendum to enable the people of Western Sahara freely to exercise their right to self-determination.

In the Mediterranean almost a quarter of a century ago my country distinguished itself through its pioneering role in highlighting the indivisible link between the two coasts of our common sea with regard to security and cooperation matters. The Helsinki process began at that time. Because of its dedication to the Barcelona process, Algeria is today continuing to work to establish and consolidate permanent frameworks for dialogue and cooperation so as to ensure that we deal in a satisfactory manner with the political, security, economic and human concerns of all the States in the European-Mediterranean theatre as well as the legitimate aspirations of their peoples. We are encouraged in this regard by the reaffirmation at the Second Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Malta on 15 and 16 April 1997, of the dedication of the Mediterranean countries to the Barcelona process, which rightly constitutes a major political achievement that should be preserved and promoted.

In the same context, I am pleased to refer to the holding of the fourth meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Mediterranean Forum in Algiers on 11 and 12 July. This provided the European-Mediterranean theatre with a special meeting place for dialogue to foster mutual understanding and give a new dynamic to the promotion of the European-Mediterranean partnership, at both the multilateral and bilateral levels.

Within the Mediterranean theatre, recent developments in the Middle East are in many respects causing great alarm and legitimate concerns on the part of the international community. Prospects for peace that were recently opened up by the peace process now seem dangerously distant, and fear of a return to confrontation is increasing every day.

At the heart of the current impasse are the Israeli Administration's renunciation of the Oslo declaration and the Washington agreements; its negation of the principle of land for peace and its refusal to resume negotiations at the point at which they were suspended; and its continuing policy of settlement, including in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, where a programme of systematic judaization is continuing. The Israeli Administration must understand that only a lasting peace — that is, a just and comprehensive peace — can ensure genuine security for all the peoples of the region.

The revitalization of the peace process requires the Israeli Administration urgently to end its unilateral actions, which are contrary to the spirit and letter of the commitments that it entered into.

Similarly, it cannot indefinitely and with impunity go against the will of the international community, which has set as an absolute requirement for peace withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon, as well as the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Also in that part of the world the Iraqi people are continuing to suffer unjustly from the effects of a cruel embargo. My country can only renew its appeal for the lifting of sanctions, which have lasted for too long and cannot be justified today. This appeal also applies to the situation of the Libyan people, who also continue to be subjected to an embargo that is as unjust as it is invalid.

Given the start of the process of disengagement from Africa by the international community, and the

dangers of marginalization, Africa's resurgence demonstrates its firm determination to take charge of its destiny and to break the cycle of dependence once and for all. This welcome development also demonstrates the collective determination of Africa to face the considerable challenges that confront it by relying first and foremost on its own resources. In fact, every day Africa gives the lie to the theory that it is condemned to be a zone without laws or development, a zone of insecurity and instability.

The democracy and pluralism, which are gaining ground every day in Africa and taking firm hold and the economic growth at rates that are often spectacular, point to new development prospects. At the same time, Africa is showing a promising capacity for conflict management and resolution.

The establishment of the Organization of African Unity Central Organ's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and the Treaty setting up the African Economic Community are the product of the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance which is rooted in African culture and of a strategy for giving fresh impetus to intra-African factors of integration and complementarity. This is the forum to state that the international community must encourage and help these praiseworthy efforts.

In this regard, we welcome the convening of a special ministerial meeting of the Security Council on Africa, which is a major political advance. We venture to hope that we are thereby taking steps towards international solidarity with the African continent, which will finally be considered an active partner which cannot be excluded from humankind's great march towards the fulfilment of its destiny.

The signs of recovery which have recently been evident through the growth of the world economy are a real source of satisfaction. However, this slight improvement needs to be consolidated so as to make it the lasting trend of the end of the century.

In this regard, it is particularly important that the problems of development around the world, and particularly in developing countries, be given priority, since the current contribution of developing countries is still well below their potential and falls short of the role they legitimately want to play.

The phenomenon of globalization, which promises so much, instead continues to bring great uncertainty to the countries of the South, which is compounded by concern at seeing many of them further marginalized and even excluded from the long-awaited overall development process they so desire. This state of affairs is mainly due to a structure of international relations still marked by the North-South divide. It highlights the continuation of the basically adverse nature of an international economic environment characterized by the North's increasing monopoly of the decisive elements of development: trade, financial and stock markets, flows of capital and investment, and technology transfer.

The countries of the South have made economically and socially costly adjustments, and carried out bold reforms in their quest for greater integration into world trade, but they still encounter numerous difficulties. These are aggravated by, *inter alia*: stifling external indebtedness; a continued deterioration of the terms of trade; an alarming decline in official development assistance; and an equally worrying reduction of international cooperation for development in general.

These disturbing trends are in contrast with the global consensus that has emerged during major international conferences organized over the past decade under the auspices of the United Nations. They raise legitimate questions as to the very future of the system established to organize international cooperation for development.

On the eve of the third millennium, and at a time when we are trying to find consensus on the need to reform our Organization to prepare it to take up challenges and face future tasks, we all need to do some soul-searching. Tomorrow's United Nations will be what we, the peoples of the United Nations, want it to be. And the new United Nations that our countries intend to build will, above all, need to be freed from the mistakes and bad habits of the past.

Yesterday, the United Nations was a melting pot for the ideals and values that unite us; tomorrow its job is to reconcile these ideals and values with all the expectations of our peoples and nations that are still to be met. This reform project should result in our ideals and values being dealt with in the only way that matters, namely, turned into a vision that become reality. This is what lies at the heart of this major project which we can undertake for the United Nations and, in the final analysis, for ourselves.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of

the Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, on whom I now call.

**Mr. Lengsavad** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Laotian; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): In accordance with tradition, I take this opportunity to begin by congratulating the President most warmly on his assumption of the presidency of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. His unanimous election, which has placed him in this highly responsible post in this important international arena, is a warm tribute to his country, Ukraine. I wish him every possible success in the discharge of his difficult duties.

I would also like to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, on his dynamic presidency during the last session of the General Assembly.

The Lao delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, our new Secretary-General, for his good work so far. His first nine months at the helm of our Organization have been a time of strenuous effort and resolute action aimed at reforming our universal Organization to make it more effective and better suited to meeting today's challenges. To our new Secretary-General, we express our sincere wishes for success in shouldering his weighty and great responsibilities.

The general trend towards dialogue and cooperation between States and peoples for the progress of humankind in this new era continues to characterize international relations. Clearly, we are delighted because on the whole this is highly positive. However, in several regions of the world we still witness persistent tension and conflict, due to interference in the internal affairs of States; the implementation of policies aimed at hegemony over developing States; and tribal, ethnic, religious and other divisions. This situation of tension and conflict is a potential threat to peaceful coexistence and harmony between States, and may even jeopardize the current atmosphere of international cooperation to promote development. In the interests of world peace, a sine qua non for the promotion of socio-economic development, we should work together patiently and resolutely, to find realistic and appropriate solutions as soon as possible.

In Europe, the peace accords signed in Dayton on 14 December 1995 opened the door to resolving the painful and destructive conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We truly hope that the parties concerned will sincerely and strictly honour their commitments in order to preserve the fragile peace and cooperation in that region.

In some African countries tribal and ethnic conflicts continue to rage, causing serious harm to their peoples. We express our sincere sympathy to the peoples of these countries over the untold suffering they have had to endure. The Lao People's Democratic Republic considers it imperative that the international community, and in particular the countries concerned, redouble efforts to resolve these disputes as quickly as possible.

In the Caribbean, multifaceted cooperation between the States of the region continues to grow, thus contributing to peace and security in that part of the world. In this context, it is time the United States of America made greater efforts and undertook reasonable negotiations with the Republic of Cuba to resolve their differences, in the interest of both the American and the Cuban peoples and in the interest of regional and global peace.

In the Middle East, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, in accordance with the Washington accords signed in 1993, marked a crucial stage in the search for a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which dates back over 30 years. The peace process which had been set in motion is now confronting grave difficulties, as the recent violence clearly demonstrates. The Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses its grave concern regarding this situation. We very much hope that the parties concerned — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization — will show great wisdom, and even greater restraint, and will engage in serious negotiations to resolve their problem, thus contributing to restoring peace and stability to this sensitive region.

In the Korean peninsula, the implementation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America of agreements that had been concluded and the recent opening in New York of preliminary quadripartite talks on peace in Korea are important stages in the efforts to ease tension and confrontation in that region. In this context, the Lao Government and people, while welcoming the efforts of the parties concerned, express their unswerving support for the legitimate aspirations of the Korean people to live in peace and achieve the peaceful reunification of the Korean homeland.

In South-East Asia, efforts to strengthen economic, cultural and other cooperation and improve the settlement of disputes by peaceful means are clearly priorities.

The admission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar as fully fledged members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 23 July last was a historic event of great significance. It is our firm hope that an ASEAN of 10 will become a reality in the near future and will contribute to strengthening our region, and making it more prosperous, in the interests of peace, stability and cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, and in the world at large.

Another problem which has aroused international concern is the recent event in Cambodia. Fortunately, the current Government has been able to restore normality in accordance with the country's legislative procedures. The international community, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, continues to recognize and respect His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk as Head of State of Cambodia. It is our hope that all countries and the United Nations will also respect his royal authority.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, political stability continues to be solidly guaranteed. The multi-ethnic Lao people are living in solidarity and unity — a fact which ensures social harmony. In accordance with our Constitution, the fourth elections for the National Assembly will be held in mid-December. That election will once again demonstrate the fervent patriotic spirit of the Lao people and the development of its democracy towards the establishment of a State of law, a State of the people, by the people and for the people.

In the economic sphere, implementation of the renewal policy, which began in 1986, has made it possible for our economy to experience sustained growth, with an annual rate for the past five years of approximately 7 per cent. Unfortunately, this year, my country suffered equally sizeable losses because of natural disasters and the repercussions of financial recession in South-East Asia. Nonetheless, cooperation between Laos and the international community remains very strong.

Parallel with its admission to ASEAN, the Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to strengthen its relations of bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries in the region and in the world on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual interest. In order to ensure the sustained development of the national economy, the Lao Government has taken important measures to integrate its economy and its market with those of the region and of the world. This integration is of great benefit to national and foreign investors thanks to the country's economic and other potential such as its geographical location, in relation to major regional markets, its transit role, its role as a supplier of hydroelectric power to neighbouring countries and export producer, using the country's raw materials, and its innumerable natural tourist attractions.

Following up its endeavours and successes of the last 10 years through the implementation of its renewal policy, the Lao Government firmly intends to continue its policy of developing the country on the basis of a market economy and broadening relations of cooperation with the international community. Its aim is to extricate the country from its state of underdevelopment by the year 2020 and to establish a preliminary basis for its gradual transformation into an industrialized, modern country under the slogan "Building a strong and prosperous country, ensuring the well-being of the people, forming a civilized and fair society".

The world economy is seeing some signs of growth. Nonetheless, this growth falls short of expectations. We witness growing inequalities between developing and developed countries. The international economic environment in terms of access to markets and financial resources granted on preferential terms for development purposes is, in general, in decline. Faced with this situation, the developed countries must spare no effort to take the necessary steps by coordinating their macroeconomic policies in order to bring about a recovery of the world economy thanks to a stronger liberalization of trade, which would contribute to establishing an international economic environment more favourable to development.

The problem of drug abuse remains a subject of international concern. My country has taken many national and international measures with a view to contributing to the global effort to eradicate this scourge from the face of the earth. For the first time, in May, the Lao People's Democratic Republic was unanimously elected a member of the important Commission on Narcotic Drugs by the Economic and Social Council. We are profoundly grateful to the international community for this demonstration of confidence and support and we will make every effort to discharge our responsibilities honourably.

Last June, after over three years of hard work, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, An Agenda for Development. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is pleased at its adoption, which it regards as an important stage in the effort to build a real partnership between the developed and developing countries. The Agenda for Development, a highly valuable document, provides a foundation of principles, objectives, measures and actions which can serve as a guide to Member States in the global approach to development questions in the immediate and long term and at the national and international levels.

That June, the General Assembly met in special session to review the implementation of Agenda 21 five years after the Rio Summit on environment and development. At the conclusion of that session, a follow-up programme on the implementation of Agenda 21 was adopted without a vote; the importance of that implementation, *inter alia*, to the eradication of poverty in the years to come was stressed. The international community is therefore called on to exert every effort to strengthen cooperation to make this programme a reality.

As we near the twenty-first century, the United Nations — the only universal multilateral body — has an important role to play in the consideration and management of international affairs. If it is to be commensurate with that task, our Organization must adapt to the new dynamic and complex world. In this context, we express our sincere gratitude to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the important initiatives of his programme of reform, issued last July, which aim at reorganizing our global body in order to make it more flexible in its structure and more efficient in its actions. This very important programme generally tries to take the interests of Member States into account.

In considering these questions, it is necessary to emphasize that any reform process must have the primary goal of strengthening the Organization's capacities to promote social and economic development for all States, particularly the developing among them. At the same time, this promotion must be undertaken while addressing questions related to peacekeeping, human rights and humanitarian activities. It is on the basis of these essential criteria that we would wish to see the Organization reformed and revitalized and given an improved structure, a more democratic regime and a solid financial footing. If we do so, the United Nations will be able effectively to meet the new challenges of our times.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp.

**Mr. Longchamp** (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, I wish to convey the pleasure of the Haitian delegation at faithfully attending this great annual meeting, which always has a particular importance for us. It is yet another opportunity to participate in the discussions on the great questions before us and to seek better solutions in our quest to preserve international peace and security and promote economic and social progress.

The consideration of various subjects will certainly entail difficult debates, but Mr. Udovenko's long experience and solid understanding of international problems are sure guarantees for the successful outcome of our meetings. In congratulating him on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, I wish him every success in his guidance of our work.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Ambassador Razali Ismail for the achievements of the fifty-first session.

To our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I convey our satisfaction at the dynamism with which he has infused the Organization since he assumed office.

Three weeks ago, the wreck of a passenger boat, which killed more than 100 of my compatriots, threw the country into grief and the entire world into dismay. Messages of sympathy arrived from every corner, as did assistance that helped us to cope with this tragedy. On behalf of the Haitian people and Government, I wish to express our deep gratitude to the international community, which, yet again, has demonstrated great solidarity with my country.

For some time, the gist of statements made in this Organization about Haiti was a plea for the restoration of a state of law and an end to the violence and brutal authoritarianism. Today, I am pleased to convey the message that the Haitian people has been greatly relieved by the reestablishment of democratic institutions, assisted by the international community, and the United Nations in particular.

I wish to highlight some of the progress that has been made in the political sphere and the efforts exerted to consolidate the gains of the new democratic deal, whose rules of play are being increasingly respected. The transition of power has been recognized and accepted as a cardinal principle of political life. The state, quasi-state and civil institutions are being further strengthened. Socio-professional associations and pressure groups are playing an ever more active role.

In the field of human rights, no effort has been spared to end the repressive practices that characterized the former dictatorial regimes. Arbitrary arrests, summary executions and abuse have practically disappeared. The structures of oppression have been dismantled and replaced by institutions sensitive to the need to respect citizens' rights. This is the case with the National Police force that has replaced the Haitian Armed Forces, which were the main perpetrators of human rights violations in the country. Created barely two years ago, this Police force continues to acquire the experience necessary to carry out its responsibilities for keeping the peace and public safety. It is already gearing up to ensure security and stability throughout the country when the mandate of the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti ends in late November.

The judiciary, for its part, has enjoyed special attention, given the desire for justice expressed by the populace. Parliament is currently considering a bill that will allow the necessary deep-rooted reforms to be undertaken to improve the administration of justice.

While the political situation in the country has stabilized, economic and social performance has lagged behind. The gaps created by the crisis of 1991-1994 have yet to be breached. Democratic institutions are up and working, it is true, but they remain fragile because certain needs of the public have yet to be fulfilled.

Nonetheless, efforts are being undertaken to revitalize the economy. For example, it has been decided to modernize public companies. Hence, the creation of the Council to Modernize Public Companies. Cooperation with Parliament has already led to the creation of legal instruments aimed at maximizing the potential of these companies to the great profit of users and the consumers of the goods and services they produce. Similarly, the fiscal and financial system is being reformed and trade liberalized. A bill on customs tariffs is currently under consideration by Parliament.

In order to invigorate national production, an agrarian reform programme has been launched that aims at bestowing ownership on the peasants of their means of production. It works on three levels: access to land, access to credit and availability of technical training. The Government believes that agrarian reform will facilitate the social integration of citizens who have long been marginalized.

This programme falls within an anti-poverty campaign led by the Government in order to assist the poorest sectors of society. As can well be imagined, the democratic process in Haiti is being pursued, but it remains fragile because of the precarious situation and the great poverty of the people. It is quite obvious that, if it is to be viable, it must be maintained, nurtured and supported by sustainable development.

The Heads of State and Government who met here during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations two years ago committed themselves to enabling the Organization to carry out its mandate properly. Consequently, the Secretary-General is now proposing a programme of reforms to strengthen the role of the Organization and to give it a new impetus. We thank the Secretary-General for this initiative, to which we give our full support. This bold and innovative proposal will enable the Organization to become more effective and carry out its mission fully.

Some of the measures presented have drawn our particular attention. For example, there is the idea of regrouping the activities of the United Nations around five major themes: peace and security, economic and social development, development cooperation, humanitarian affairs and human rights. However, we must ensure that development issues, which are crucial for the majority of Members, are given the same attention as other themes — if not more. Any reform must give development the priority, resources and political commitment it deserves.

The question of Security Council reform, which is still being studied, is another matter on which we must make progress, given the Council's role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Haiti continues to call for more transparency and participation in the Council's work, so that the views of States which are not members of the Council are considered in the decision-making process. Any expansion of the Security Council should be carried out in a way that guarantees a fair and equal geographical representation. Everything

should be done so that the universality of the inhabitants of our planet is recognized in the United Nations system.

However timely they may be, reforms alone will not make the Organization more efficient if it does not have adequate financial resources to carry out its activities. We are convinced that the financial crisis of the United Nations may reduce its capacity to cope with the serious problems it faces.

We need a strong and efficient United Nations, capable of finding solutions to current problems and facing the challenges of the next century. It is through the orchestrated, collective action of the United Nations that we will be able to overcome our numerous current problems, which threaten international peace and security and compromise the well-being of our populations.

There we refer first to the many armed conflicts which are raging in all regions of the world, some of which seem to resist any attempt at a negotiated settlement. Haiti encourages the use of regional and multilateral mechanisms to solve these conflicts.

Likewise, the existence of vast arsenals of weapons of mass destruction is a grave threat to our collective security. The progress achieved in the area of disarmament — especially the opening for signature last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention — is encouraging. However, we urge the countries concerned to make further efforts to achieve complete and true disarmament.

The Republic of Haiti welcomes the recent adoption of the text of a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. This is an important step in the battle to eliminate these deadly devices, which have caused so much suffering and which continue to take a toll among civilian populations, especially among women and children.

The illicit use of drugs and drug trafficking are also problems which the international community must face with determination. They are, in fact, a threat to the internal security of small States because of the violence and criminality with which they are often associated. Furthermore, drug use affects the most vulnerable stratum of society: young people. International cooperation is absolutely necessary to overcome this scourge.

Since 1960 several summits and conferences devoted to poverty and development have been organized. Recommendations have been formulated and measures have been contemplated. Nevertheless, poverty continues to gain ground. According to the 1997 *Human Development Report*, more than 1.5 billion of the planet's inhabitants live in a state of extreme poverty, particularly in African countries and less developed countries, which see themselves increasingly marginalized.

The eradication of poverty, especially in the least developed countries, should go beyond simple speeches or resolutions. It requires a strong political will, adequate resources, well defined strategies and the implementation of appropriate programmes. It also requires the sincere support of the international community, especially the support of international institutions and the leaders of the industrialized countries, namely, those who possess technology and wealth. The battle against poverty must also be a struggle for human dignity, sustainable development and peace.

With a view to strengthening international peace and security, the Republic of Haiti has pursued a policy of good neighbourliness which has enabled it to come closer to countries in the region. It has established with the Dominican Republic a mechanism for consultations through a joint Haitian-Dominican Commission. This is an excellent tool for cooperation and working together to find a solution to the various problems of the island. We would like to see this important forum continue, as it represents a necessary stage towards greater mutual understanding between the Haitian and Dominican peoples.

Likewise, Haiti recently rejoined the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). By getting the train of integration under way, my country intends to contribute in a significant manner to the realization of the objectives of the Community, because Haiti is aware that a strong, open-ended, united CARICOM will largely determine the socio-economic performance of the Caribbean region. In this context, we urge the international community to continue to support the reconstruction of Montserrat.

Fifty-two years ago at San Francisco we undertook to work for the progress and happiness of our peoples in a world where peace and security would reign. We should therefore work to realize their dreams and meet their expectations and aspirations.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs

and Special Envoy of the President of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullah.

**Mr. Abdullah** (Afghanistan): Let me impart at the outset the sad news I received early today of the aerial bombardment by the Taliban of the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the sixteenth consecutive bombardment in just two days. These bombardments have taken as many as 150 lives among the civilian population of the city, mostly women and children. I express outrage and condemnation at this cowardly act of terror, which typifies the Taliban's gross violation of international humanitarian law and their relentless belligerence against every norm recognized by the world today.

I stand before the Assembly and the world community in the tradition of past Afghan representatives — with the exception of those during the years of occupation — representing an independent, sovereign and non-aligned Afghanistan.

One year ago, our Foreign Minister, the late Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai, stood on this podium to explain the dark and ominous movement known as the Taliban, which — backed by foreign forces — had invaded Afghanistan. Tragically, Mr. Ghafoorzai died in the service of his nation. So today it is my duty to stand before the Assembly to explain the struggle the Afghan people have waged against these mercenaries.

When the Taliban entered Kabul on 27 September 1996 their first act was to storm the United Nations complex. The past 12 months have seen a seemingly endless series of edicts issued by the Taliban in areas of Afghanistan that they claim to control. Under those edicts, they have in fact imprisoned every woman and terrorized every man.

Their latest ignominious act has been to arrest Emma Bonino, the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, her aides and a group of visiting international journalists, including CNN's Christiane Amanpour. Outraged by the Taliban's act, the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Klaus Kinkel, said that he considered it a slap in the face and an act of "cynical disregard for the entire European Union". The group was eventually released, but not before at least two of its members were beaten with the butt of a Kalashnikov rifle. Ms. Bonino told Reuters that the experience had given her a taste of what Afghans go through every day under the Taliban.

> "This is an example of what people here go through every day: in a situation of random terror." [*Reuters News Wire*, "EC commissioner released by Taleban," 29 September 1997]

An Afghan quoted in *The New York Times* of 24 September 1997 stated,

> "Most days I wake up thinking we'd all be better off dead than under these fanatics."

These are just a couple of facts to open a small window onto the gloom and despair facing our people.

As this terror continues in Afghanistan, we are here today to discuss the Afghan question, which is now an international issue.

As the crisis in Afghanistan continues to unfold, we must ask — and answer — important questions, questions to be answered particularly by those who, under the guise of neutrality, equate the aggressors with the victims of aggression. Those questions are: Who is following the rules of the civilized world? Whose actions warrant recognition? Who deserves to participate in civilized discussion at a global level?

On the battlefield, we continue, of course, to defend ourselves and our nation. In this imposed war, we are taking what we consider to be the moral high ground of negotiation and dialogue.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan — like many others in the world, including some prominent Pakistani politicians and commentators — still identifies Pakistani intervention and interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan as the root cause of the prolonged conflict and the subsequent suffering of our people.

Pakistan constantly alleges that the Taliban control two thirds of Afghanistan, including Kabul, where peace prevails. Mr. William Maley, the renowned Australian expert on Afghanistan, stated earlier in the year that the Taliban brought peace to Kabul in the same sense that Hitler brought peace to Warsaw.

On 7 August 1997, Mr. Gohar Ayub Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, said:

> "In Afghanistan ... the majority in the country is Pakhtoons, who are 60 per cent. The other groups,

including Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras and Ismailis collectively, constitute about 40 per cent."

The Pakistani Foreign Minister is blatantly inventing fraudulent statistics to fuel the flames of ethnic hatred and conflict in Afghanistan and to justify Pakistani objectives. No valid statistics could claim that any ethnic group in Afghanistan — Pakhtoon, Tajik, Uzbek or other — constituted more than 37 per cent of the population. If Pakistan continues its irresponsible policy of perpetrating ethnic hatred in Afghanistan, a consequential escalation of "ethnic cleansing" will threaten the national unity of our country.

Pakistan maintains that it has no favourites in Afghanistan. The reality is that the Pakistani establishment has designated one group of Afghans to be the natural rulers over all the rest and conceivably to turn Afghanistan into a subservient protectorate State.

The reality was best expressed by Fred Halliday, an international affairs specialist at the London School of Economics, who wrote last November:

> "The capture by Taliban guerrillas of the Afghan capital, Kabul, however short- or long-lived, has come after two years of one of the most obnoxious interventions by one State in the affairs of another in many years. Reported in the West as an indigenous struggle, in fact Pakistan set up the Taliban as a semi-regular fighting force in 1994 ... providing them with ... guns, money, fuel and technical support ... Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan has harboured the goal of dominating its northern neighbour." [*The Nation*, "Kabul's Patriarchy with Guns", 11 November 1996, p. 19]

And, finally, the Pakistani Government, by proposing the dubious "vacant-seat" formula for Afghanistan, strives to expel from the United Nations a country that has been a member of this global body since before the birth of Pakistan.

My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having summarized the tragic situation in Afghanistan in his address to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly on 22 September 1997.

According to General Assembly resolution 51/195 B, which was adopted unanimously on 17 December 1996, and fully supported by the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Assembly is

> "Strongly committed to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan". [*resolution 51/195 B*, seventh preambular paragraph]

The General Assembly also stressed

> "the importance of non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan". [*ibid.*, sixteenth preambular paragraph]

Unfortunately, since last year the supply of weapons and ammunition from abroad has massively increased and constitutes a very important programme of action by the powerful Pakistani intelligence service, Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).

The situation has also worsened with regard to what the resolution called

> "actions undermining the security of State frontiers, including the growing illicit traffic in arms and narcotics by criminal elements and groups from [Taliban occupied] areas of Afghanistan and ... the use of [occupied] Afghan territory for the training and harbouring of terrorists". [*ibid.*, eighteenth preambular paragraph]

It is amazing that some of the countries that consider terrorism a threat to peace should nonetheless — while claiming impartiality — favour the rejectionist Taliban by equating them with the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which shares the mounting concerns of the General Assembly in this matter.

With regard to the peace process, we share the view that

> "the main responsibility for finding a political solution to the conflict lies with the Afghan parties". [*ibid.*, paragraph 2]

The Taliban, however, favoured, encouraged and assisted by the cross-border political and military support, consider their only responsibility to be the waging of an aggressive war aimed at conquering the whole of Afghan territory by crushing all resistance movements.

The Taliban's intransigence and disregard for United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem are a fact well known to the international

community. The report of the Secretary-General dated 16 March 1997 indicates that:

> "The Taliban, judging both from their words and from their activities on the ground, appear determined to gain military and political control of the whole of Afghanistan and to establish their vision of an Islamic State". [*A/51/838*, paragraph 7]

The Secretary-General's report (A/51/929) of 16 June 1997 equally illustrates Taliban's choice of the military option and its intention to overrun the country by force. This utterly bellicose position of the Taliban, while prolonging the suffering of the Afghan people is aggravating the concerns of the countries in the region, which views it as a serious threat to the region's peace and security. It is worth mentioning that the Taliban's aggressive attitude is encouraged by military intelligence services of neighbouring Pakistan, which still hopes to install a puppet regime in Kabul, subservient to its expansionist and hegemonic desires. The dull-minded interventionists should read the history of Afghanistan once again and learn from the defeat of previous aggressors in this homeland of dauntless and courageous people.

We are fully aware

> "that a cessation of armed hostilities ... and political stability are indispensable if reconstruction measures are to have a lasting effect". *(Resolution 51/195 A, eighth preambular paragraph)*

The Taliban have expressed no interest in the urgently needed reconstruction of the country. In fact, starvation by blockade is their favourite weapon against Afghans.

We express our full

> "support for the continuing efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan" *(Resolution 51/195 B, thirteenth preambular paragraph)*

led by Mr. Norbert Holl, and the special assignment on 30 July 1997 of Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to assess the situation and the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

We reaffirm the full support of our Government for the

> "activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, in facilitating ... in cooperation with [neighbouring and] interested States and international organizations, the political process towards the goals of national reconciliation and a lasting political settlement with the participation of all parties to the conflict". *(ibid.,* paragraph 5)

Because of the shortage of time, I am omitting some paragraphs from my prepared text.

The Taliban have refused to negotiate any political settlement and have insisted on a unilateral military solution.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan honours

> "its commitments regarding the safety and full freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, in particular the personnel of the United Nations Special Mission, as well as the security of their premises in Afghanistan." *(ibid.,* paragraph 7)

Recently, however, as a result of the disturbances brought about on 14 September 1997 by Taliban infiltration, the premises belonging to international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif were plundered. This city was previously a haven of peace and security. The Islamic State of Afghanistan remains committed to the safety of the United Nations personnel and the personnel of other aid agencies in Afghanistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, in the light of the mounting needs of the Afghan people, appeals to all donor agencies not to abandon Afghanistan, particularly in the face of the upcoming harsh winter.

Security Council document S/1997/588 of 25 July 1997 explains the Islamic State of Afghanistan's agreement to a Declaration of the United National and Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, the foundation for an enlarged body representing all ethnic groups from all over Afghanistan. The Declaration addresses an appeal in favour of the peace process to the Taliban and the Pakistani Government.

We favour

> "An immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties, to be supervised by a commission composed of representatives of all the warring parties, facilitated by the United Nations". *(ibid.,* paragraph 8)

One of the most important elements in the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan is the call for

> "demilitarization of Kabul, with adequate safeguards to ensure security and public order". *(ibid.)*

The Islamic State of Afghanistan considers this point to be very important. It could constitute a credible precedent that could be applied in the future in other parts of the country.

The

> "establishment of a broad-based and fully representative authoritative council" *(ibid.)*

as required by the General Assembly resolution, will be feasible if the appeal of the United Front inviting the Taliban to join the Front is heard. The Islamic State of Afghanistan, in this regard, extends its full cooperation to the United Nations. It is imperative to secure the agreement of the Taliban with the United Nations and to ensure its full cooperation with such a broad-based authoritative council.

We are ready to cooperate for the creation of

> "a national security force to provide for security throughout the country and oversee the demobilization of all the warring parties through the collection and safeguarding of all heavy weapons in the country, and to stop the flow of arms and of equipment related to arms production to the parties". *(ibid.)*

We are grateful to the leaders and Governments of the central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan for their respective proposed peace initiatives, as well as to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Apart from supplementing each other, these initiatives may be coordinated so as to lead to the convening of useful negotiations with a specific agenda under the auspices of the United Nations. The proposals, however, thus far have not been accepted by the Taliban.

The General Assembly deplored

> "the civilian casualties inflicted by the indiscriminate use of landmines." *(ibid.,* paragraph 11)

The Taliban have recently spread landmines in and around the northern city of Kunduz. This is only one example of Taliban mass use of landmines.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan shares the General Assembly's deep concern over and denunciation of

> "the discrimination against women and girls and other recurring abuses of human rights in Afghanistan ... emphasizing the importance of democracy and of the realization of human rights in any future political process in Afghanistan". *(ibid.,* ninth preambular paragraph)

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, said in his statement of 25 September in this Assembly:

> "Canadian women, appalled at the treatment of their sisters in Afghanistan, have started a letter-writing campaign. I will be delivering some 5,000 letters today to the Secretary-General, which call on him to take the lead in exposing the gross human rights violations of women in Afghanistan as unacceptable in the eyes of the world's citizens." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 12th meeting]

We draw the attention of the General Assembly to the recent document (A/52/384) containing the Declaration of Principles made by the United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, adopted on 20 September 1997 by the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The Declaration, systematizing a political framework for the country, contains the following principles: first, the principle of Islam; secondly, the principle of independence and international cooperation; thirdly, the principles of democracy and pluralism; fourthly, the principles of election and delegation of authority to local administration; and, fifthly, the principle of human rights.

The General Assembly last year called on

> "all States strictly to refrain from any outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, including the involvement of foreign military personnel". *(Resolution 51/195 B,* paragraph 15)

Regarding the involvement of Pakistani military personnel in Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan has transmitted amply documented information to the United Nations.

The book, entitled *The Not-So-Hidden Hand* — produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Islamic State of Afghanistan — has been distributed to the members of the Security Council, some other interested countries and the Secretariat of the United Nations. This book — I will not go through it; it is a big book — documents directly and proves the physical presence of Pakistani paramilitary and military personnel inside Afghanistan, fighting alongside the Taliban against the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The book includes, first, identification photos of each Pakistani captive, prisoner registration forms with detailed descriptions, fingerprints and other data pertaining to each; secondly, identification cards taken from some prisoners that illustrate their membership in extremist Pakistani organizations responsible for terrorist acts in South Asia, such as Anjuman-i-Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan; and thirdly, correspondence from most of the prisoners to their families in Pakistan, written mostly in Urdu — the official Pakistani language, which is not spoken in Afghanistan.

I should like to remind the Assembly that on 3 July 1997 Mr. Francis Okelo, the Deputy Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, together with a United Nations military adviser, paid a visit to Maimana prison in northern Afghanistan and verified the physical presence of Pakistani military prisoners in the prison. And *The News* of 6 September 1997 — printed in Islamabad — contains an article entitled "Pakistanis in Masood's captivity plead for release".

The General Assembly called upon all States immediately to end the supply of arms, ammunition, military equipment, training or any other military support to all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan. Furthermore, document A/52/403, dated 29 September 1997, confirms the recent dispatch of some 600 additional military personnel and that shipments of arms from Pakistan to Afghanistan have significantly increased.

The General Assembly has reiterated that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan provides a fertile ground for terrorism and drug trafficking, which destabilize the region and beyond. The United Nations Information Service reported on 11 September 1997 a rise in opium-poppy production in Afghanistan to 2,800 metric tons in 1997, an estimated 25 per cent increase over 1996. Mr. Derek Fatchett, a Minister in Britain's Foreign Office, pointed out in *The Guardian* of 25 June 1997 that the Taliban war chest is financed by drug money. Furthermore, 96.4 per cent of Afghanistan's total opium production originates in provinces currently under Taliban control, according to the United Nations Information Service report.

Afghanistan, as a State party to the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 23 November 1972, has recognized its primary duty to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, preservation and transmission to future generations of, *inter alia*, the cultural heritage situated in the country. The General Assembly has called upon all Afghan parties to take appropriate steps to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property of the Afghan nation. The Taliban, however, on 17 April 1997, out of fanaticism expressed its intention to demolish the two largest statues of Buddha in the world. In spite of great concern by the Secretary-General and Mr. Federico Mayor, Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and many Buddhist leaders throughout the world, the Taliban did not exhibit any change of attitude. Fortunately, its military push was repulsed and the colossal statues remain intact.

In this context, reference should be made to the ancient artifacts plundered from the rich Kabul National Museum. According to Pakistani press reports, the artifacts have been added to the personal collections of the former Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and the former Minister of the Interior, Nasirullah Babar. On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, I call upon the Pakistanis to return these irreplaceable Afghan artifacts, which are also part of the world's cultural heritage. I urge UNESCO to investigate the matter.

I should like to announce that the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, together with some other countries of the third world, will co-sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Towards a culture of peace," submitted under agenda item 156. My delegation also supports the resolution of the Economic and Social Council adopted in Geneva entitled "Proclamation of the Year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace".

We want to establish the best fraternal relations with Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. Afghanistan's pivotal location places it, as always, at the crossroads of different corners of Asia. Naturally, no regional economic cooperation — in the context of the transit of goods, petroleum and natural gas — can succeed without a peaceful Afghanistan enjoying administrative unity.

Afghanistan must cease to exist as a country of confrontation, discord and clashes. Rather, it must turn into a land of interrelation, association, joint action and cooperation. This is the genuine desire of all patriotic Afghans and of the true friends of Afghanistan.

Fifty-two years ago, the United Nations was founded on the paramount ideals of a safer world and on parameters of global peace and collective security. The Foreign Minister of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, said in his speech last week before the General Assembly:

> "We no longer live in a world of purely national interests. More and more, policy-making is informed by global concerns such as human rights, solidarity and social justice. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, let us pledge to settle religious and ethnic conflicts through dialogue, tolerance and cultural exchange, and to find collective answers to international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and the degradation of the environment." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 11th meeting]

Let me from this rostrum remind all of us here, as the general debate draws to a close, that we must ask ourselves about the level of our commitment to the implementation of the ideals I have mentioned.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): I call on Mr. Pierre Osho, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin.

**Mr. Osho** (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): As I take the floor on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Benin, I would like first to associate myself with the words of congratulations and deep appreciation expressed to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko by previous speakers. They spoke so eloquently that I will confine myself to saying how hopeful I am that this session will benefit from his proven competence and his remarkable analytical mind in order to draw from our debates constructive conclusions that preserve a just balance between the different suggestions and recommendations contained in the various statements.

The particular significance and nature of this session do not reside only in the impressive gathering of leaders from 185 Member States. That has long been customary, and has even become ritual, during this period every year since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. What confers on this fifty-second session a distinctive character, and what promises it an excellent place in the annals of the United Nations, is the central focus of its agenda, which, as we all know, is devoted to structural reform.

What is our assessment of the specific reform provisions that are to be discussed and decided upon in the course of these meetings? What are the ins and outs of reform, the issues at stake and the real objectives? Are the reforms capable of giving the Organization the means for productive and effective action to meet the complex problems and numerous challenges on the horizon of the next millennium, whose effects are already strongly felt in the everyday realities of today's world?

These are a few of the major concerns of countries, such as mine, that are today experiencing both hope and doubt: hope based on the enormous potential of our Earth, whose intelligent, rational and well-directed use should make it possible to ensure the progress, prosperity and development to which all peoples legitimately aspire; but also doubt, a feeling of stubborn and profound uncertainty constantly fuelled by misery and poverty, ignorance and disease, technological lags, and the economic backwardness that over 1.5 billion human beings suffer from.

Since his election in January 1997 our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has resolutely tackled, with commendable diligence, strength and motivation, the preparation of a programme for reform, which he himself rightly describes as

> "the most extensive and far-reaching reforms in the fifty-two year history of this Organization." (*A/51/950*, Letter of Transmittal, first paragraph)

It is reform aimed at giving the United Nations

> "the ways in which the United Nations can more effectively and efficiently meet the challenges that lie ahead as we enter a new century, and a new millennium". (*ibid.*)

We regard as appropriate the global approach taken by the Secretary-General, his view of general and sectoral problems, the thrust of the measures and solutions he advocates, in accordance with a methodology that combines pragmatism and the need for democratic and more effective functioning. Therefore, the delegation of Benin is in favour of the bulk of the proposals in the report.

Nonetheless, I must draw attention to the following considerations to which my country attaches great importance.

First, Benin believes that it would not be appropriate to eliminate the Committee for Development Planning, which is, *inter alia*, entrusted with developing the performance criteria for the least developed countries. We believe that rather than having it replaced by groups of experts created by the Economic and Social Council we should consider purely and simply retaining the Committee.

Secondly, since the situation in Africa is one of the priorities on which the Secretary-General would like to focus in the next five years. My country would hope that the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries might be strengthened in terms of human and financial resources in order to be better able to play a full role within the United Nations system.

Thirdly, although on 20 June 1997, following over three years of negotiations, the General Assembly adopted the Agenda for Development, it is regrettable that the Secretary-General's reform programme made no mention or explicit reference to mechanisms and means for implementation and assessment of the Agenda. My delegation hopes that this question will be taken into account in the framework of measures envisaged in order to bring about the renewal of the Organization.

Lastly, I would like to anticipate the results of our session by saying that, both individually and collectively, we must firmly commit ourselves to implement the decisions and measures that will be taken in the framework of this long-awaited reform.

Our consensus will be not a triumph for the ideas of one State or group of States over another, but, rather, the fruitful result of a shared political resolve to adapt our universal Organization to the changes and developments of this end of the century period.

Here, and with specific reference to reform of the Security Council, Benin strongly recommends that the following principles should be taken into account: an increase in the membership of the Security Council truly reflecting the political and economic configuration of today's world; equitable geographical representation of the five regional groups, with the African group entitled to four seats, two permanent and two non-permanent; and protection of democratic and transparent functioning, ultimately involving the elimination of the right of veto.

By formulating the 15 priority objectives of his reform programme as a series of profound changes of major scope which should enable the United Nations to embark resolutely on a course of radical reform, the Secretary-General produced a document of undeniably high quality, whose title — "Renewing the United Nations" — is significant in more than one respect.

Given the noble and legitimate aspirations of the entire international community for the future of the planet, the Organization certainly needs to be renewed in order to confront effectively and successfully the exciting yet disturbing challenges posed by globalization. Renewing the United Nations requires a new vision of the world, new conceptions and approaches to partnership among nations, and new methods for the Organization and for handling relations among States in a new world. That is the real problem. Those are the real stakes at a time when we are inexorably approaching a new millennium. Globalization is both a phenomenon and a process; it has become the recurrent and omnipresent theme of all debates and of all concerns.

Like other members, I noted with particular interest that President Clinton — first at the Waldorf Astoria hotel on the evening of 21 September, then the following day in this Hall — forcefully and germanely stressed the need for the United Nations to ensure that the globalization of the economy does not create deep disparities between rich and poor and that it establishes innovative partnerships between the private sector, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions.

As the representative of a least developed country, Benin, I cannot but welcome this great and noble idea, imbued with generosity, pragmatism and a spirit of solidarity. But, looking the facts in the face, what do we see?

When on 18 December 1991 the General Assembly adopted the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, it created a new political covenant, one of whose vital features was the principle of shared responsibility and the international community's full and complete involvement with Africa with a view to achieving development objectives including a real growth rate of at least 6 per cent per annum in gross domestic product, and a minimum net total of $30 billion in official development assistance for 1992, with an annual increase averaging 4 per cent beginning in 1993.

Today, six years after the adoption of the New Agenda, in spite of all the efforts of African countries to make better use of official development assistance, and in spite of the express intention of a number of developed countries to support the development of Africa, the total volume of official development assistance to Africa has declined considerably: by about one third compared with the forecast of $30 billion.

It was in this context of the decline in official development assistance that the famous United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa was launched in March 1996 in order to lend fresh momentum to the New Agenda. But it is obvious that this great initiative can be successful only with the support of the international community, through a massive mobilization of financial resources to carry out the programmes and projects that have been set up. While, to be sure, it is first and foremost up to the African countries to make the greater part of the effort, the excessively restrictive procedures and conditionalities for the granting of loans, and the lukewarm reaction of certain creditors to the idea of simply cancelling the foreign debt of poor countries, are obstacles to the effective mobilization of the expected financial resources.

In a publication issued at Washington just a few months ago, in May 1997, the International Monetary Fund defined globalization as

> "the growing economic interdependence of the entire world caused by an increase in the volume and variety of transborder transactions in goods and services, and in international capital flows, along with the rapid and broad dissemination of modern technology".

Welcomed by some, feared by others, globalization has become an unavoidable economic reality for all nations. For most experts and other analysts, this process marks the success of the global spread of an economic liberalization that began in Europe half a century ago with the Marshall Plan. In their view, it brings unprecedented possibilities to billions of people all over the world.

For us in Africa, that optimistic vision needs to be tempered, for possibilities are not realities. So that it can become a reality, the harmonious pursuit of the globalization process, in the context of real development for all those billions of people throughout the world, especially in Africa, necessarily presupposes a new international programme of solidarity and cooperation for the poor countries, without which globalization will very soon transform their regions into a poor and marginalized periphery of a hyper-rich and hyper-developed world.

In fact, the developed countries are already doing a great deal for Africa, if we consider the sum total of the loans made to the continent through bilateral and multilateral assistance. And yet, contrary to what statistics, curves, graphs and growth rates would have us believe, African populations have not yet felt any tangible improvement of their standard of living in their daily lives. In spite of all this, for the immense majority of Africans the will to survive is stronger than despair, and hope prevails over resignation.

The ministerial meeting of the Security Council devoted to Africa, held on the commendable initiative of the United States last 25 September, led to a fruitful exchange of views that showed us a real will on the part of the international community to become more actively, more significantly and more concretely involved in a new type of partnership with Africa in order to contribute to its development.

The signs of this real readiness on the part of the developed countries have proliferated in recent years, as we can see, *inter alia*, from the resolutions of the G-7 adopted in Lyon and in Denver, assistance programmes of the eighth European Development Fund, President Clinton's initiative for a partnership for economic growth and opportunity and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD I), and so on.

All in all, it can be said that the will exists to help Africa emerge from poverty and underdevelopment, that concrete actions are being undertaken in this direction and that new commitments are being made. Nevertheless, there still remain, unfortunately, enormous problems, and Africa continues to present to the world the desolate spectacle of endemic poverty, aggravated by crises and fratricidal conflicts.

In order to put an end to this distressing situation, Africa's development partners should envisage a comprehensive and integrated mechanism for flexible, operational and effective financing, free of bureaucratic impediments and red tape, with the aim of establishing a centralized funding entity to receive resources from all sources to be devoted to economic and social development.

The end of the cold war, the process of economic globalization and the progressive realization of the

concept of sustainable development offer the opportunity for profound change, calling into question some of the traditional solutions and conventional answers to development problems.

In the dark centuries of the slave trade, Africa contributed blood, sweat and the toil of its strongest arms to the building of the bases of the economy of the New World. The collective memory of humankind must not forget this important historical fact. Today the developed countries have the moral duty to be as concerned as Africans themselves about the destiny of Africa, not to abandon Africa along the roadside of globalization and to make available to it part of their enormous material, technological and financial strength, in order to support Africa's efforts in the struggle to emerge from underdevelopment and to enter the modern age.

In order that the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, Agenda 21 and other programmes of action can be truly successful, it will be necessary to establish a global system of operations and financing for Africa, like the Marshall Plan, which contributed greatly to the reconstruction and economic and social recovery of Europe after the Second World War. The establishment of this mechanism before the year 2000 will make it possible for Africa to stride confidently, not slouch, into the twenty-first century.

Shortly before the statement that was made on 5 June 1947 at Harvard University by General George Marshall to define the foundations of his well-known European Recovery Programme, President Harry Truman stated:

> "Our duty is to help free peoples to fashion their own destiny in their own way. I believe that our assistance must be first of all economic and financial, because this is essential to economic stability and political order."

Fifty years later, this magnificent and noble spirit of solidarity, displayed voluntarily by the great American people and its Government, still retains all its validity and all its historical meaning.

There are cases in which, because of the requirements of its own unfolding, history repeats itself. Here at the end of a century, we are experiencing one such case: it is necessary to meet the urgent need for a new Marshall Plan for Africa. And the upcoming second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) could provide one of the best opportunities to do so.

If the international community works resolutely in this direction, we will have laid the solid and indestructible foundations for a road on which we will all be able to march triumphantly into the third millennium.

For its part the Government of Benin, while awaiting the fulfilment of that hope, has developed the concept of a shared social minimum level in order methodically and effectively to take actions and measures aimed at eliminating poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy, providing adequate housing, guaranteeing productive employment, improving standards and conditions of living and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. This concept was the subject of an international symposium, supported by the United Nations system, which was held in Cotonou from 4 to 6 August 1997.

The consolidation of our process of democratic renewal, which began after the historic National Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation in February 1990, necessitates immediate and short-term social and economic successes. That is why we are endeavouring, with our limited resources, to take multifaceted actions to improve the living and working conditions of our rural and urban populations. However, we know that we can rely on international cooperation, founded not only on solidarity, but on mutual interest and partnership, to overcome the difficulties confronting us, to support our efforts at economic and social recovery, to build a State genuinely based on the rule of law and to construct a free, democratic, modern and prosperous nation.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on the representative of Canada, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Duval** (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his statement this morning, and especially for his favourable reference to the Ottawa process and the global efforts to prevent

the production and use of anti-personnel landmines. However, I should like to clarify one issue with regard to the Minister's statement that some members of the Security Council refused to support the idea of a temporary multinational force, led by Canada, in response to the humanitarian crisis raging in what was then called eastern Zaire. It is important to recall that the mandate of the multinational force in question was adopted unanimously by the Security Council as resolution 1080 (1996) on 15 November 1996.

**The Acting President** (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Pakistan, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

**Mr. Islam** (Pakistan): The gentleman styling himself as the representative of Afghanistan made a number of objectionable references about Pakistan in his statement this afternoon. My delegation would like to reserve the right of reply, and will exercise it at a later stage.

*The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.*